

# Indiana House of Representatives

## News and Information

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### **CROOKS: SHORT- AND LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS NEEDED TO HELP HOOSIERS AT THE PUMP; LAWMAKER SEEKS ELIMINATION OF GAS SALES TAX AND DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATE ENERGY**

INDIANAPOLIS – While long-term solutions are needed to protect the energy needs of Indiana residents, State Rep. Dave Crooks (D-Washington) said more immediate relief must be provided to help Hoosier families plagued by high gas prices.

"The news that faces Hoosiers when they go to the pump is not pleasant," Crooks said. "What is needed is real leadership at the national level, from both the president and members of Congress, but we are not seeing any real efforts at helping protect the interests of families from high gasoline prices. If they will do nothing at the federal level, it is important for state lawmakers to step in and fill the void."

That approach, he continued, should address both immediate solutions and development of initiatives that reduce our dependence on oil.

"Going back the past several sessions of the Indiana General Assembly, you can see the beginnings of efforts to encourage development of alternative fuels like ethanol and biodiesel," said Crooks. "Thanks to bipartisan efforts in the Indiana General Assembly, more ethanol plants have opened, are under construction or on the drawing board.

"I have no problem with the governor of this state speaking out on the development of alternate fuel sources through a comprehensive energy plan that spurs development of ethanol, biofuels and clean coal technology, among other ideas," he continued. "These ideas not only can reduce energy costs, but help put more Hoosiers to work.

"But what is disturbing to me is that all of these potential solutions offered by the administration will take several years to fully implement," Crooks said. "They will do nothing to help Hoosiers right now. If you're standing on the shore and watching people drown, you don't help them by telling them you're going to build a boat. You send them a life raft."

To Crooks and other Democratic lawmakers, that lifeline would be immediate suspension of the state's 6 percent sales tax on gasoline, followed by elimination of the tax during the 2007 session of the Indiana General Assembly. Indiana is one of only seven states that has a sales tax on gasoline.

"State law enables the governor to suspend the sales tax on gasoline when we have reached a crisis situation, and I have heard from many constituents who feel we are in an emergency," Crooks said. "Gasoline is an essential commodity for people who have to use their cars every day, and we are reaching the point where a person must do without other necessities in order to fill up the family vehicle.

"If we provide relief now, families will have more money for clothes, food and other critical needs," he continued. "I want to see that money in the pockets of Hoosier families, rather than go to oil companies and the state of Indiana."

To date, the governor has declined to endorse a suspension of the sales tax on gasoline, but Crooks said the issue remains something lawmakers need to pursue in the months to come.

"We shouldn't have to make a choice between long-term and short-term solutions to help Hoosier families," Crooks said. "I think we need to do something now and work to make sure that our future is protected."

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